


OFFICE OF

National Marine Sanctuaries

**Workshop Report:
National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council Chairs and Coordinators Meeting
February 2001**





This document summarizes the first National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Chairs and Coordinators Meeting. This document provides a report to Sanctuary Advisory Council members, National Marine Sanctuary System staff, and members of the public on the subjects discussed during this meeting and steps that are being taken to follow up on the meeting.

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Introduction

The National Marine Sanctuary System (NMSS), a federally managed marine protected area program, received authority from Congress in 1992 to establish advisory councils to provide advice to Sanctuary Managers regarding the designation and management of National Marine Sanctuaries. Sanctuary Advisory Councils (SACs) operate at eight existing Sanctuaries and the new Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve; the NMSS intends to establish SACs at the remaining five sites without a SAC and in any new sanctuaries designated in the future.

The NMSS held its first national meeting of SAC Coordinators on May 3 and 4, 2000. During this meeting, hosted by the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary in Port Angeles, Washington, participants identified a number of accomplishments and follow-up activities (summarized in a workshop report in July and available on the NMSS's website at www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov). One of the follow-up activities was to hold a meeting of all SAC Chairs and Coordinators (see Table 1 for a list of participants). Such a meeting was recently held on January 31 and February 1, 2001, hosted by the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, in Monterey, California. During this meeting, participants:

- Received a general overview of what SACs are and how they have evolved, their position within the NMSS, and the national policies and procedures regarding their operation;
- Met and shared site-specific accomplishments and challenges each SAC has faced;
- Continued the dialogue begun by the Coordinators at their first meeting in May 2000;
- Participated in a mini-workshop that focused on planning and conducting effective meetings; and
- Identified solutions to problems that some or all SACs have in common.

Day 1

On the first day of the workshop, participants were given the opportunity to learn about the national and local guidelines and efforts associated with Sanctuary Advisory Councils. A national overview highlighted the history and current status of SACs; recommendations about SACs resulting from a review of the NMSS by the National Academy of Public Administrators (NAPA); and ongoing projects that address those recommendations along with other needs identified by the NMSS.

Each Chair was asked to offer their responses to the following questions (summarized in Table 2):

- The top issue dealt with by the SAC;
- What has worked well for the SAC; and
- What hasn't worked well for the SAC.

The participants then moved into a discussion of issues focussed on two areas that have been shown to be of concern to all or most SACs: communication (among SAC members, among SACs, between a SAC and its constituents, between a SAC and the media, and between a SAC

Table 1: SAC Chairs and Coordinator's Meeting Participants

Name	Affiliation
Daniel J. Basta	NMSS Director, NMSS Headquarters
Hannah Bernard	Chair, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale NMS ¹ Advisory Council
Karen Brubeck	Coordinator, Thunder Bay NMS/Underwater Preserve Sanctuary Advisory Council
Kellie Cheung	Coordinator, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale NMS Advisory Council
June Cradick	Coordinator, Florida Keys NMS Advisory Council
Tom Culliton	Facilitator, NOS Special Projects Office
Brad Damitz	Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Bill Douros	Superintendent, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Tim Goodspeed	Facilitator, NOS Special Projects Office
Stephanie Harlan	Chair, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council
Jim Henry	Chair, Gray's Reef NMS Advisory Council
Jennifer Lukens	National Council Coordinator, NMSS Headquarters
Craig MacDonald	Superintendent, Stellwagen Bank NMS
Dianne Meester	Chair, Channel Islands NMS Advisory Council
Elizabeth Moore	National Council Coordinator, NMSS Headquarters
Mike Murray	Coordinator, Channel Islands NMS Advisory Council
George Neugent	Chair, Florida Keys NMS Advisory Council
Andy Palmer	Coordinator, Olympic Coast NMS Advisory Council
Deborah Pardike	Vice-Chair, Thunder Bay NMS/Underwater Preserve Sanctuary Advisory Council
Brady Phillips	Coordinator, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council
Lisa Randlette	Chair, Olympic Coast NMS Advisory Council
Becky Shortland	Coordinator, Gray's Reef NMS Advisory Council
Robert Smith	Reserve Coordinator, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve
Jennifer Stock	Education Specialist, Cordell Bank NMS
Kate Van Dine	Coordinator, Stellwagen Bank NMS Advisory Council
'Aulani Wilhelm	Coordinator, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve
Paul Wong	Education Specialist, Gulf of the Farallones NMS

¹National Marine Sanctuary

and a sanctuary) and the roles, responsibilities, and legal guidelines of SACs (the roles that SACs play and how to be most effective within the legal and policy guidelines that exist).

The Chairs were asked to identify the communications issues their SACs had faced. Among them were:

- achieving and maintaining closure on issues;
- obtaining feedback from a Sanctuary Manager about decisions that are made after advice has been given;
- raising the comfort level of SAC members to act as spokespeople for the Sanctuary;
- developing ground rules and protocols for SAC communications, and ensuring that current and new members are versed in those rules and protocols;
- optimizing a member's ability to represent and communicate back to his or her constituents; and
- maintaining communications among members between meetings.

As a group, the participants felt that of this list, the most important issue to address as a group was

Table 2: Council Chair Presentations

Chair and Sanctuary	Responses
Diane Meester Channel Islands NMS Chair	<p><u>Top issue:</u> The Council has focussed on the management plan review process and the formation of marine reserves at this site.</p> <p><u>What has worked:</u> Good relationship exists between the site staff and the Council; the level of information provided to the Council at the beginning of the process was great; and the Council has been effective in being a source of information to the site staff.</p> <p><u>What hasn't worked:</u> The Council has not clearly understood its role in the management plan review process, including how the preferred alternative is chosen in the NEPA process and how to participate in reviewing documents; the Council has been frustrated in some cases as being purely an advisory body without any authority.</p>
George Neugent Florida Keys NMS Chair	<p><u>Top issue:</u> The Tortugas 2000 effort to designate an ecological reserve in the Tortugas has been the most important accomplishment for the Council.</p> <p><u>What has worked:</u> The people on the Council and the staff are the key to the Council's success; the Council succeeds when there is public trust is what the Council does.</p> <p><u>What hasn't worked:</u> The Council does not succeed if there isn't public trust in what they do, and it is a challenge to maintain that trust by working with 100% scientific accuracy, and balancing the environment and economy.</p>
Jim Henry Gray's Reef NMS Chair	<p><u>Top issue:</u> The Council has focussed on the management plan review process at this site.</p> <p><u>What has worked:</u> The Council has worked well in having its retreat and the strategy workshops, which have all been very successful.</p> <p><u>What hasn't worked:</u> The Council has not yet run into something that didn't work well; but would like to add several new members from the community and the Sapelo Island NERR, and would like to form working groups on fishing, multiple uses, education, and resource protection.</p>
Hannah Bernard Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale NMS Chair	<p><u>Top issue:</u> The Council is dealing with the transition of a site that is maturing (going from newly designation to fully operational); the greatest success to date was helping get state approval for the Sanctuary.</p> <p><u>What has worked:</u> The Council has been moving forward and building trust with constituency groups; the Conservation Subcommittee has been particularly successful in providing advice.</p> <p><u>What hasn't worked:</u> The Council's large size and the geographic realities have made meeting challenging; even with large size, the Council still feels as though it does not represent all groups; the Council has a few contentious members.</p>
Stephanie Harlan Monterey Bay NMS Chair	<p><u>Top issue:</u> The Council has dealt with many issues, but most recent successes were the approval of a vessel traffic plan by the International Maritime Organization and working with the state on a kelp harvesting plan.</p> <p><u>What has worked:</u> The Council has knowledgeable and committed members, and good working groups; the Council was instrumental in getting satellite offices established in Santa Cruz, Cambria, and Half Moon Bay.</p> <p><u>What hasn't worked:</u> There have been personality conflicts among Council members; the Council wants more autonomy from the Sanctuary Superintendent, including communicating with external parties and choosing their own members.</p>

Continued

Table 2 Continued: Council Chair Presentations

Chair and Sanctuary	Responses
Lisa Randlette Olympic Coast NMS Chair	<p><u>Top issue:</u> The Council has had successes in dealing with fiber optic cables; capital facilities; encouraging the establishment of a non-profit organization; and deciding whether Area-To-Be-Avoided guidelines should be mandatory or not.</p> <p><u>What has worked:</u> The Council is very comfortable with its advisory role; the sanctuary staff is dedicated and provides excellent support; the Council has formed a successful marine conservation working group that is looking at protecting intertidal habitats.</p> <p><u>What hasn't worked:</u> The Council has had some difficulty in working with the four tribes; the Council needs a better idea on its role and how to better advise the Sanctuary Manager; the working groups have not drawn upon the larger constituency.</p>
Deb Pardike Thunder Bay NMS Vice-Chair	<p><u>Top issue:</u> The Council's biggest issue was fear, expressed as mistrust of the federal and even the state government; the community is very protective of its rights and resources.</p> <p><u>What has worked:</u> The Council was instrumental in seeing this site designated; part of this success came in dealing with the fear, providing direct answers to questions, in writing, and providing an opportunity for public comment at all meetings; another part of the success came in not asking the Council to vote on whether the site should be designated but in asking what should the site look like if it were designated.</p> <p><u>What hasn't worked:</u> The Council has not had anything that really didn't work, but thinks fear will continue to be an issue and that the biggest challenge will be drawing in the detractors of the site.</p>

the development of ground rules and protocols for communication. A working group of Coordinators and Chairs was formed to examine all of the existing communications protocols among the SACs and to develop a protocol that each site can use to adapt to their own communication needs. The protocol will be included in the Council Implementation Handbook.

The Chairs were then asked to identify the issues their SACs had faced in dealing with roles, responsibilities, and legal guidelines. The Chairs identified the following:

- having recourse if the SAC does not agree with the Sanctuary Manager;
- being able to communicate with Congress and other external parties without having to obtain the Sanctuary Manager's concurrence;
- keeping members focused on "the bigger picture" instead of individual issues;
- determining how working groups interact with the full SAC; and
- determining the SAC's role in processes governed by the National Environmental Policy Act.

As a group, the participants felt it was important to discuss a method for recourse if the SAC did not agree with a Sanctuary Manager's decision. The participants recognized that as SACs are advisory bodies, there was not a way for them to change a decision that a Sanctuary Manager makes. However, the participants stressed that it was important for SAC members to know they had been heard, both by the Sanctuary Manager and by the leadership of the NMSS. The

participants were assured by the Director of the NMSS, Daniel J. Basta, that they would always be heard by the leadership. The participants expressed their appreciation but also requested that a new protocol be created for the Handbook, that would provide guidance to Sanctuary Managers on how they should respond to advice that had been given by the SAC. Such a protocol should include reporting back to the SAC on any actions resulting from its advice and providing copies of letters sent to the NMSS and NOAA leadership. The participants felt that any such letters should also include minority or dissenting views on the SAC so that the NMSS leadership is fully aware of a SAC's minority and majority positions on a particular issue. The NMSS agreed with this suggestion and will be including such a protocol in the Handbook.

Participants raised another issue, regarding a lack of conflict of interest guidelines. The Charters do contain some language related to this matter, but the participants felt that guidelines could be more clear and simple, and suggested that additional guidance be developed; these guidelines should be included in the Handbook and also in application packages for potential new members. The NMSS agreed to develop those guidelines.

Day 2

The second day began with a facilitated workshop for the Chairs and Coordinators on how to plan and conduct effective meetings.

The afternoon was focussed on the recommendations made by NAPA pertaining to NMSS and SACs. An overview of each recommendation and steps that the NMSS has taken in response was presented, and then discussed by the participants, as follows.

NAPA Recommendation: Use the SACs and working groups to provide a way for local fishermen, environmental advocates, divers, and other members of local communities to participate directly in designing no-take zones, in cooperation with other agencies that have authority to designate or approve such areas.

NMSS Response:

- There are fishing and conservation representatives on all SACs, and diving representatives on four SACs, in addition to a variety of other community representatives.

Group Discussion: The participants felt that SACs optimize their effectiveness by having the "right" members on the SAC, and that even with the "right" members there was still a need for extensive outreach to the community.

NMSS Response:

- Fishing constituencies are represented on the Tortugas 2000 working group and the CINMS marine reserve working groups.

NMSS Response:

- Lessons learned about ecological reserve working groups have been transferred from one SAC and Sanctuary to others, by staff and SAC members speaking to other groups.

Group Discussion: Participants from those sites that have used working groups in such processes indicated that there must be a very clear, preferably agreed-upon goal before initiating the process.

Additional Participant Suggestions:

- The NMSS should have clear policies about the use of ecological reserves.
- The NMSS should be more willing to “rock the boat” in terms of increased resource protection.

NAPA Recommendation: Create a formal SAC of leading citizens at each site that provides advice and shares responsibility for protecting the sanctuary.

NMSS Response:

- There are currently seven sitting SACs among the thirteen sanctuaries, with SBNMS reconstituting their SAC and a new SAC forming for the NWHI Reserve. NMSS policy dictates that SACs be created for all those sites who currently do not have one, even though there is no statutory requirement to do so.

Group Discussion: The participants acknowledged that having SACs is valuable, but also indicated that there is a need to determine how effective SACs have been (e.g., how often has the advice of a SAC resulted in increased protection of the resources). The discussion also focussed on how effective individual members have been in relaying information to and from their constituents.

Additional Participant Suggestions:

- Determine some measures of effectiveness for SACs (e.g., conduct community awareness survey; track how many members of the public attend meetings; determine if constituents feel comfortable bringing issues to the SAC, etc.).
- Have members become more effective in representing their constituents, by attending meetings of their constituents, hosting townhall meetings of their own, and by reporting to the SAC on their efforts to engage their constituency.

NAPA Recommendation: Embrace the SACs as partners rather than holding them at a distance as unneeded and uncontrollable meddlers.

NMSS Response:

- The NMSS helps to ensure community participation in significant sanctuary decisions (i.e., sanctuary designations, management plan reviews, and ecological reserve development) by establishing or refocussing SACs at all sites undergoing significant actions or projects.

Group Discussion: The participants discussed how crucial SACs had been in getting some sites (FKNMS, HIHWNMS, TBNMS) designated, and how necessary SACs are during management plan reviews, and stressed how important it was to provide the necessary support and information for SACs to be able to fully perform their advisory function. Some participants felt as though SACs were not being as fully valued as they should be. Some participants also felt that SACs needed more autonomy than they had been given.

Additional Participant Suggestions:

- Use working groups to expand the voices of the SAC rather than trying to enlarge SACs themselves.

- Help SACs raise their public profiles.
- Provide training to help Sanctuary Managers become more sensitive to their SACs.

NAPA Recommendations: Ensure that the members of the SACs represent the full array of user groups but do not set aside seats for each group and Charge SAC members with the responsibility to consider the full array of sanctuary resources and to help with balancing interests and building communications among different user groups, rather than asking them only to represent one user group.

NMSS Response:

- The NMSS feels that specific seats should be designated for each SAC, to help ensure that all community segments have a voice and that SACs are balanced in points of view represented.

Group Discussion: The participants agreed that it was valuable to have designated seats. Among other things, it gave the public an idea of who to talk to about a specific issue.

NMSS Response:

- The NMSS has decided that each Sanctuary can determine on an individual basis the seats that are appropriate for its SAC.

NMSS Response:

- NMSS policy is that all SACs should be provided the authority to have working groups, which provide a quick and flexible way to expand or amend the people involved in SACs and sanctuary issues.

NAPA Recommendation: Take steps at the national level to improve relationships between sanctuaries and their SACs.

NMSS Response:

- The NMSS has prepared a policy statement as part of the SAC Implementation Handbook that affirms how SACs can help achieve the goals of the NMSS.

NMSS Response:


- The NMSS has initiated a series of workshops for SAC coordinators and chairs, beginning with the coordinators meeting in May 2000 and continuing with the Chairs/Coordinators meeting. Future workshops are expected to continue, and involve Sanctuary Managers as well. Also, the Handbook provides information on briefing new SAC members when they first join a SAC.

NMSS Response:

- The NMSS has provided an institutional framework that supports all SACs but is flexible enough to meet the needs of individual SACs. Some consistency among sites is necessary, which is obtained by a uniform infrastructure which eases the operation and formation of SACs. However, sites are given significant flexibility, including determining their seat composition, choosing members, scheduling and planning meetings, and developing annual plans.

Additional Participant Suggestions:

- The NMSS should encourage annual retreats for each SAC, to facilitate SAC involvement in setting



priorities for the sanctuary.

- The NMSS should investigate ways to share products and news among all the SACs (possibly via a website or listserv).

Conclusion

All of the participants indicated their satisfaction after the meeting and expressed enthusiasm for having a similar meeting every year. The NMSS agrees and is planning to host a meeting in early 2002 for the SAC Chairs, Coordinators, and the Sanctuary Managers of those sites with SACs. The NMSS also committed to revising and completing the SAC Implementation Handbook. Additional sections to the Handbook, including the communications protocol and conflict of interest guidelines discussed above will be prepared and added to the Handbook before it is finalized.

Action Items

The NMSS has committed to the following action items as a result of the workshop:

- Working with a working group of SAC Chairs and Coordinators, develop a communications protocol to be added to the Council Implementation Handbook.
- Develop simplified guidelines on conflict of interest, to be added to the Council Implementation Handbook.
- Develop protocol for Sanctuary Managers to acknowledge advice provided by SACs, to be added to the Council Implementation Handbook.
- Revise the Council Implementation Handbook to include the above protocols, and other additions, and provide to the SACs for a final review.
- Finalize and print the Council Implementation Handbook.
- Begin planning the 2002 Chairs, Coordinators, and Managers Meeting.